

Mark 7:31-37

It has been said that the most difficult feat in all of professional sports is hitting a baseball. And the numbers seem to back up this statement. A football quarterback who completes just thirty percent of his passes will soon find himself sitting on the bench. A basketball player who makes thirty percent of his shots will not long be a member of the team. But a baseball player who gets a hit three times out of ten is considered a top-notch hitter. And if he can accomplish this feat year after year for his entire career, he will be guaranteed a place in the baseball Hall of Fame.

Jesus never hit a baseball as far as we know, but His achievements in all other areas were a perfect 100%. He didn't cure six out of ten diseases; He cured them all. No one who came to Him with an ailment had to wonder, "Will I be one of the lucky ones?" No one ever walked away from Jesus disappointed. His "batting average" wasn't a measly .300; it was a perfect .1000. The blind, the lame, the lepers, the demon-possessed--all were healed. One day the people in the region east of the Jordan River summed up His ministry. After watching Him heal a man who was deaf and dumb, they said with amazement, "He has done all things well."

Those words could never be said about us, could they? "He or she has done all things well." We like hearing such words. We like to think well of ourselves. We point out our achievements to others. We do our best to cover up our failures, but wear with pride those things we have done which bring us praise. But if we pause to really take a good hard look at our life, it becomes obvious that we aren't batting .300, or even .100. All that we do is tainted with sin. We must confess with the prophet, "All my righteous deeds are but filthy rags."

Rather than do all things well, we do all or most things poorly. Couples who have been married a long time, if they are truthful, will admit that only the grace of God kept them together. Never can it be said of a husband and wife, "They have done all things well in their marriage." Just the opposite, because of sin showing itself in selfishness, pride, and jealousy, husbands and wives do most things poorly. They survive solely by God's grace. And when their children turn out well, it's not because they raised them so well. It's because, in spite of their sins and weaknesses, God was gracious. He did well, through them, what they were unable to do.

Next Sunday we as a congregation will celebrate 150 years. This is quite an achievement. Many churches do not last that long. And we are inclined to pat ourselves and our ancestors on the back and say, "We have done, if not all, many things well to be here for 150 years." But that is not true. Have we done all things well as a congregation with regard to our church attendance? Our study of the Word of God? Our place at His Communion Table? Our sacrificial giving of our time, treasures, and talents? Have we done all things well in being attentive to the Word? In treating our fellow members with love? In forgiving those here who sin against us? Can it not be said of Christ Lutheran Church that in the last 150 years, though we have not done all things well, we are a blessing to the Church-at-large, and to our community, because through us God did all things well?

We do not do well. We do poorly. We sin, we fall, we fail, we quit, we walk away, we shirk responsibility, we pass the buck to others, we hold grudges, we get angry and offended. We do things, not well, but poorly. But you have a Savior who did all things well for you. Jesus did not do all things well for Himself. He did not care about praise being heaped upon Him. All He did, He did for your sake. Even healing the man who was deaf and dumb--He did that for you so that you see that same miracle in your life.

You and I were born deaf and dumb. Deaf to the sweet sound of the Gospel. Dumb...unable to speak of its joys. Our tongue, like that man who was dumb, was also tied not with a speech impediment, but with Satan's chains. He had stopped up our ears from hearing the good news of God, and kept our mouths from shouting its praises. But as Jesus opened the ears and loosened the tongue of that man, so in your baptism He did the same thing for you. Normally spitting on a person is an insult, but with His saliva and with words from His mouth Jesus made that man hear and shout for joy. It may be an odd way of looking at it, but when you were baptized Jesus also spit upon you. His saliva was poured out on you. As His words were spoken into your deaf ears and His water of life sprinkled upon your sinful head, He opened your ears to hear the good news of your salvation and loosened your tongue to confess Him as your Lord and Savior.

Jesus made you His own in your baptism, and He knows full well that even as His dear child, you and I do not do all things well. He knows how we have messed up our lives and the lives of others by how poorly we live and speak. He knows the poor way we often treat each other. He knows how poorly we act even as His Christian people. Friends, that's why He died for you. Jesus did not just do all things well in His life; He did all things well in His death. His death on a cross was the perfect sacrifice for all the things that you and I have done so poorly. Because of His perfect death and resurrection for you, God forgives you, each one of you, for all of your sins.

So now, hearing this good news, are we going to go out and start batting .300 with our lives? Are we going to start doing more things well? That's not for me to know. But this we do know...that any good thing that comes about in our church; any good thing that happens in your life and mine; anything that is done well in your marriage is not because we did it. All we do is tainted with sin. We can only do all things poorly. But it's because Jesus did it well in you and through you. Only He does all things well.

It's not about, you see, how well you do in life. It's admitting that we do things poorly for we are poor sinners, but that Jesus did all things well for you. His life for you. His death for you. His resurrection for you. His Baptism, His Supper, His Word and Church for you. And so we gladly join those people east of the Jordan and point, not to ourselves, but to Jesus and say, "He has done all things well." Amen.